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ABSTRACT

Examining the role of the debate judge reveals many differences between the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) and National Debate Tournament (NDT). One area in which CEDA differs is that of judge qualifications. At present CEDA is moving towards using more lay judges, while NDT has more strict requirements. It would be interesting to use two judges in a tournament, one lay and one professional, keeping a separate tab for each and comparing their results. Another way in which CEDA differs from NDT is the fact that certain regions of the United States are doing a kind of debate that does not even resemble CEDA as it appears in other regions. Furthermore, directors are selecting tournaments based on the kind of debating they support. Because of this, many CEDA debaters are beginning to request the judges' preference or paradigm before beginning the tournament. The problem with this approach is that some teams do the opposite of what the judge likes and offend the judge. If both teams ignore the judge's preference, the judge is caught in a bind according to the current rules, as he or she must select a winner. A tournament philosophy page which accompanies the invitation is a better way to help debaters and judges better understand the expected environment of the specific tournament. Since the judge is the main agent for controlling abuse in debates, they should be more involved in policing the debates. The critic holds the future of debate in his or her hands, and should not take the responsibility lightly. (PRA)

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Where CEDA Differs

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Forensic educators and students have long contemplated the role of the debate judge or critic. The importance of the critic's role is well-established in the history of the activity. John Bourhis points to the judge as a dominant character who has a heavy responsibility for the direction that debate is going and will go in the future. He suggests, "Debaters will continue to exhibit those behaviors (good or bad) that are rewarded with the 'win.' If the critic rewards the debater who reads vast quantities of evidence in constructives, who speaks in fragmented sentences, who speaks at excessive rates, and/or who speaks incoherently, then the critic is implicitly saying these behaviors are acceptable and constitute good (winning) debate. Debaters do what we allow them to do."(1)

It is with the debate judge in mind that I will attempt to answer the question of where CEDA differs? I will examine differences with NDT and then look at the differences within CEDA.

Prior to the game-playing paradigm and the shotgun delivery era I preferred judging NDT over CEDA. NDT theory is much better developed an more widely accepted making it more enjoyable for me to provide a clear decision.

A policy proposition is much easier for me to understand and teach my students to analyze. Value topics cause a great deal of confusion to the debaters and judges. I would, personally, like to see the CEDA organization make clear that CEDA debate is a style of debate that could easily use a policy topic. It seems to me that we should experiment with one and then evaluate the results.

CEDA has been around for twenty years and many members of the forensic community feel that we need more concrete methods for arguing values. Joseph Truman agrees when he comments:

> "Debating propositions of value has acquired a very large following, yet little guidance has been offered for determining what constitutes the norms or rules for advocacy of values. Values should be seen as standards of preference or desirability guiding action, judgment, and behavior. They should be differentiated by modes of behavior and end-states of existence (instrumental and terminal) in the sense that so doing helps us to understand why we accept or reject them. Propositions of values can then be seen as questions concerning these standards of preference--and they can be placed on a continuum between questions of act and questions of policy."(2)

NDT has determined an acceptable way to argue and make decisions in most situations which may occur in policy rounds. This is a big advantage in that the majority of the schools doing policy agree on standards that have developed over its history.

CEDA has just not been able to get things clearly developed and continues to add and subtract experimental practices on a weekly basis. CEDA is basically saying that everything goes until the judge says "Uncle." It appears to me that if you were to stay off the circuit for a few weeks it would take you the rest of the season to catch up with all the new and different approaches to the activity. In comparison to NDT, CEDA is young and developing. Ulrich notes:

> "CEDA and Lincoln-Douglas debate are still in their infancy, and many judges are still searching for guidelines. The main difficulty facing judges is how to deal with value topics, given there is little material on value argument. Perhaps the most promising direction is to encourage development of diverse viewpoints about evaluation on value argument. To that end, debate judges need to be open to new theoretical positions and to modifications of old perspectives."(3)

He later warns us of some danger when he says, "The new types of debate promise to open avenues for debaters. At the same time, they risk developing the same problems they sought to avoid."(4) I feel that we are experiencing some of the problems Ulrich mentions. In my opinion they are going to get worse in the near future. Several new organizations are underway and others are being discussed. The writing is on the wall and all indicators point to some problems in CEDA that need to be dealt with soon.

Another area that CEDA differs from NDT is that of judge qualifications. CEDA has more diversity in requirements for

judges. At present CEDA is moving toward using more lay judges. Lay judge has not always been clearly defined and Howe and Brownlee define it broadly when they state, "Lay judges should be defined, however, to include non-forensic teaching faculty. Many educators in political science, economics, journalism, history psychology, sociology, etc., as well as speech communications departments, have a sufficient awareness of current issues to follow topics being debated and understand the importance of feedback in the educational process."(5)

NDT has more strict requirements for judges and most are professional type judges who spend most of their time in the activity. Many observers feel that the elite judging policy has hurt the organization.

On the other side of the coin, I have heard CEDA condemned for having such an open judging policy. Several CEDA tournaments are requiring a certain percentage of their tournament judges be of the lay type. Attorney judged tournaments appear to be gaining in popularity.

It has long been a curiosity of mine to use two judges in each round of a tournament, one lay and one professional. Keeping a separate tab for each and then comparing the results to see how significant the difference would be at the end.

One last comment on NDT and CEDA concerning their sameness in certain regions of the country. Frank mentions the similarity when he says, "Many CEDA coaches and judges who coach and judge NDT have stated that there is little or no difference between the delivery habits of the NDT debater and the CEDA debater."(6)

Let me move on to examine where CEDA differs within CEDA. Certain regions of the country are doing a kind of debate that doesn't even resemble CEDA as it appears in other regions. This really concerns me and we can't blame any other groups for our internal problems.

Travel patterns are changing so that students do not end up debating in a region that their kind of debate is unacceptable. I have noticed that when directors know that certain schools are going to attend a tournament they will attend or stay away based on the kind of debating style they will expose students to. The style of debate appears to me to be a very strong incentive that a few years ago did not exist. We would go to the tournament and deal with the difference. I know that I am guilty of this and will continue to select tournaments with the style of debating and judging philosophies that I adhere to.

I feel fortunate in being in a region of the country that encourages a brand of debate that I can support and sell to my colleagues at home. There is a real conscious effort from the majority of the members in our region to keep CEDA reasonable.

In our region we are focusing more on education and using the debate round as our classroom. Howe and Brownlee confirm this approach when they state:

> "For the debate critic, the responsibility is to be an educator, not a referee or game master. The debate round is the critic's classroom. To educate is to do far more than render a decision and explain how that decision was reached. The Northridge Ballot designed by Raymond Zeuschner, adopted for a period of time as the official CEDA ballot, focused the critic's attention on additional subjects beyond who won and why. Critics were encouraged to provide feedback on such typical areas as evidence use and organization, as well as on audience adaptation and courtesy. These were not just peripheral issues, but instead central elements of the educational task. The student debaters are, in effect, the critic's own students for that hour and a half class period. Just as the classroom educator must wisely assess how best to deliver constructive criticism, so, too, the debate judge fashions oral and written comments so as to teach, not to prove the critic's superiority."(7)

Judges in my region of the country and in CEDA overall are starting to react to some of the abuses in the activity. I hope it is not too little and too late.

One reaction I have observed and am now participating in is judge intervention. If I discover things happening in a round that I consider abusive, I am stopping it and explaining it at the time. It appears to me to be more helpful, or at least, more easily understood than just writing it on a ballot. I can remember a time when I would have been appalled at the thought of a judge intervening during the round. The fear of seeing the demise of the activity that I consider so valuable has changed my attitude.

Another difference over the last few years in CEDA is the number of debaters who are requesting the judges preference or paradigm. A serious move in this direction appears to be good for the activity. Most judges readily give their philosophy of the activity to the debaters and discuss it before the round starts. I can think of one judge in my region that hands out his philosophy on a printed sheet before every round. I think we are going to see more of this kind of approach in the future.

This information allows debaters the opportunity to adapt to the judge's specific likes and dislikes. The main problem with this attempt to work together and agree on the way we should debate the round is that some teams do exactly the opposite and really offend the judge. If both teams do it then the judge is caught in a bind and under the present system must vote for one of the teams. The judge is our main agent to control abuse in debates. If the majority of judges would get involved in policing the activity, we would see changes in a hurry. The importance of judge involvement was described by Horn and Underberg when they commented:

> "Judges should reclaim the activity. ~~Ballots~~ Judges should use the ballot as an educational tool which, among other things, provides some indication of the way we view the debate process and the debaters' performance relative to the goals and aspirations we have for the activity. In short, we should be willing to vote our conviction and not be reticent about offering some direction or protecting what we believe to be the best interests of academic debate."(8)

If the judge is way out or unreasonable in demands, the debaters must hold to their standards. Howe and Brownlee support this point strongly when they noted:

> "CEDA debaters were instructed to try to hold the interest of their audience, and even if the only non-combatant in the room was the judge, then to try to regard the critic as an audience and not just a presiding official. The 'judge as audience' was not meant to equate pandering to a single judge's whims with audience analysis and adaptation. The judge was to be the focus of the communication that would have occurred had a large audience been present. A judge's pre-debate admonition that 'I love speed. I can flow anything you say.' or 'I'm tabula rosa. Be as strange as you like.' doesn't justify rapid speaking rates or bizarre arguments. Debaters ought not betray their principles or CEDA's objectives to satisfy a critic's caprice. If the judge is the only audience, the judge is to be treated as representative of a larger, rational audience."(9)

A tournament philosophy page is another move that I see as positive in helping judges and debaters better understand the expected environment of the specific tournament. The tournament philosophy page is usually attached to the tournament information received at the time of registration. Two of the last three tournaments I have attended presented some kind of tournament philosophy material prior to the first round. It would be even more valuable if it accompanied the invitation.

In both styles of debate, the judge is a very important part of the process. The critic holds the future of debate in his or her hands. My hope is that we do not take the responsibility lightly.

End Notes

1. John Bourhis, "The Buck Stops Here," Forensic (Spring, 1982), p.15.

2. Joseph S. Truman, "Getting to First Base: Prima Facie Arguments for Propositions of Value," Journal of American Forensic Association (Fall, 1987), p.94.

3. Walter Ulrich, Judging Academic Debate (Lincolnwood, Il: National Textbook Company, 1991), p.90.

4. IBID.

5. Jack Howe and Don Brownlee, "CEDA's Genesis and Founding Principles," Paper presented at the CEDA Assessment Conference, St. Paul, MN, August 16-18, 1991, p.15.

6. David A. Frank, "Debate As Rhetorical Scholarship: Changing Delivery Practices in CEDA," Paper presented at the CEDA Assessment Conference, St. Paul, MN, August 16-18, 1991, p.12.

7. Howe and Brownlee, pp.11-12.

8. Gary Horn and Larry Underberg, "Educational Debate: An Unfulfilled Promise," Paper presented at the CEDA Assessment Conference, St. Paul, MN, August 16-18, 1991, p.34.

9. Howe and Brownlee, p.10.